13 per cent to 6 to 13 per cent. While the lowest rate offered was 10 per cent by all the 27 public sector banks in March 1996, presently a large number (17) are offering a rate of 7 per cent on shoftest maturities; others are offering rates ranging between 7.5 and 8.5 per cent. At the longer maturity of over 3 years, while all the 27 banks were offering 13 per cent during March 1996 to September 1996, the interest rates of two banks remained unchanged till February 1997 and fifteen banks reduced the rates by 0.5 percentage point. All the 27 banks are. offering 12.0 per cent on deposits with maturity of 2 to 3 years. Thus, at the longer end of the maturity spectrum, the interest rates offered have not changed much.

The lower rates offered on deposits of shorter maturities in the recent period have not had any adverse impact on deposit mobilisation by banks tluring the current financial year so far.

(d) RBI have also reported that the Deposit Insurance Scheme is being operated by the Deposit Insurances and Credit Guarantee Corporation to protect the interest of small depositors against the loss of their deposits to the extent of Rs. 1 lakh.

Capital Punishment for Drugs/Narcotic trafficking

2467. SHRI K.M. KHAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether illicit traffic in drugs and narcotics has been assuming an alarming proportion over the years;

(b) whether this social menace is to be combated urgently;

(c) whether Government have been suggested that those engaged in smuggling of smack in the country should be hanged; and

(d) if so, the details thereof with measures to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) Drug trafficking is a clandestine activity and therefore it cannot be said definitely whether over the years, illicit trafficking jn narcotic drugs has assumed alarming proportions. However as per information available, the details of Narcotic Drugs seized in the country during the last two years are give below:-

Name of drug	Quan-tity of 1995	Drugs in Kg. 1996 (Provi-sional)
Heroin	1678	1173
Hashish	3629	6414
Opium	1339	2735
Ganja	121873	60892
Methaqualone	20485	2210

(b) Yes, Sir. Government of India has already taken a number of necessary steps to deal with this social menace.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Steps to Check Black Marketing of Gold and Silver

2468. SHRI K.M. KHAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that black marketing of gold and silver in the country can be checked by import of gold and silver; and

(b) if so, the details thereof with initiatives to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) and (b) The Government have allowed import of gold and silver through licit channels by NRIs and importers holding special Import Licence on payment of customs duty in foreign exchange. It is believed that with the availability of substantial quantity of gold and silver, the clandestine